

Racial Differences Are Racial

The "Culture Hypothesis" Does Not Stand Up

By FRANK MCGURK, Ph.D.

IN A RECENT and very ambiguous article (*The New York Times Magazine*, March 27, 1977), Thomas Sowell, a Negro economist, attempted to explain away the intellectual differences between Negroes and Caucasians by giving a new twist to the Culture Hypothesis. The Culture Hypothesis has been stated in a number of different ways, but its essence is that racial differences are the result of socioeconomic (SE) differences, and that, when the SE differences no longer exist, intellectual differences will have disappeared.

Sowell talks about Old Americans and New Americans, both of which he regards as immigrant groups. Old Americans are the "... Germans, the Irish and other northern and western Europeans who had migrated generations earlier than the [New Americans] southern and eastern Europeans ..." Sowell claims to have done a survey that shows that "... the IQs of [New Americans] groups—Polish, Jewish and Italian—rose over the decades until today they equal or exceed the national

THE AUTHOR

In the mid and late 1950s Dr. Frank McGurk became an unwilling celebrity by honest reporting of his findings in the field of comparative racial psychology. His position on the faculty at Villanova University became untenable, and his relations with the academic community at large were profoundly disturbed. He survived, however, and his refutation of the "culture hypothesis" is increasingly seen as a landmark in the development of interdisciplinary understanding.

average." Sowell presents no factual evidence to support this alleged finding.

In actual fact, New Americans caught up to the Old Americans in less than three generations (counting from 1920, using 20 years for a generation), and they did this without the assistance of the federal government. No laws were passed saying that immigrants were to be considered as equals, there were no voting rights laws, no housing regulations to determine where they could live. No government paid the tuitions of the New Americans to colleges, and no government required "Affirmative Action" for them. These New Americans who had the ability used it in the same way that the Old Americans had used theirs when they were new.

Sowell seems not to have understood that not only has the Negro IQ not caught up to the Caucasian IQ, but it has shown no tendency to do so in spite of "Affirmative Action" and sympathetic laws. (Sowell apparently cannot realize that Negroes have used their environments less well than the immigrants from southern and central Europe.)

In spite of this, Sowell argues that the reason why the New Americans caught up to (and, he thinks, perhaps surpassed) the Old Americans was that the New Americans had better SE conditions in this country than they had in their old countries. That great poverty and social degradation faced the New Americans in the ghettos where they lived, Sowell finds unimportant; one is asked to believe that an American urban ghetto was culturally superior to an Italian farm. When it comes to the present-day Negro, however, Sowell

argues that the ghetto is the cause of the Negro's low scores on intelligence tests. One must have it both ways.

Sowell then argues that, since the superior SE conditions in this country permitted the New Americans to catch up to the Old Americans, the Negroes will do the same and catch up to the Caucasians. That Negroes have been exposed to the American culture in some degree for 15 generations and have shown no tendency to catch up is also ignored by Sowell. That Negroes have had a better chance of catching up to Caucasians ("Affirmative Action," facilitating laws, improvement in education, and the great sympathy of the politician) than New Americans had of catching up to the Old Americans also seems not to be understood by Sowell. In spite of all the advantages given to the Negro, he has not improved his intelligence with respect to Caucasian intelligence in the past half century.

Claims of Major Research

Sowell develops his theory at considerable length. At the beginning of the article, he claims that he and an assistant reviewed the records of 70,000 school children, and on this basis he claims to have made his finding that Negroes needed only the proper chance to become equal to the Caucasian. Such a study as Sowell implies would be one of the largest and most important sources of information in the field of racial differences. It most certainly would have been published, yet there is no word of it in the psychological literature, and Sowell does not tell his reader where to find it. Under these conditions, one must assume that either the Sowell study is a reality, or that, for one reason or another, it is not publishable.

Environmentalists like Sowell have created a paradox for themselves. We are asked to believe that improved cultural conditions will improve the intelligence of Negroes, or will be withheld from them. Caucasians, that is, will be deprived of education, good jobs, social position. The same would be cause for the claim that

Caucasians were being discriminated against, a claim which, today is somewhat of a reality; the former would be evidence of an even deeper racial difference that permits Negroes to improve under these cultural conditions which do not affect Caucasians. It is an absolute requirement, in order to maintain the Culture Hypothesis, that whatever cultural factors are applied to the Negroes, the average intelligence of the Caucasians must either stand still, or improve at a lower rate than the rate of improvement of the Negro. Otherwise, the Negroes could never catch up. One must wonder what kind of forces are those which affect beneficially only the Negro.

Is the Major Idea Correct?

But suppose that Sowell's main idea is correct: the New Americans had IQs in the low 80s upon arrival (and Sowell shows a nice picture of children bathing in a running fire hydrant on the Lower East Side of New York City in the 1920s) and that, over the half-century since, their IQs climbed into the normal range to equal the average IQ of the Old Americans. Sowell then argues that since this happened to New Americans, it will also happen to Negroes.

Sowell skips over a number of problems for his theory. First, Negroes have shown no tendency to be approaching the average Caucasian intelligence level, as will be seen later. Second, he does not mention that, on arrival in this country, the New Americans were given psychological tests that required knowledge of English. Most New Americans knew little or no English on arrival, and their depressed test scores reflected that. Sowell also omits what has been mentioned here before; the New Americans caught up to the Old Americans in less than three generations, and without the aid of a benevolent government which was also guilt-ridden. New Americans made successful development without "Affirmative Action." The New Americans stood on their own feet.

Suppose we look at the factual evidence about Negro improvement. During World

War I, some 2,000,000 recruits, Negro and Caucasian, were tested by Army psychologists. From this large group, random samples of Caucasians and Negroes, each separately, were selected so that each racial sample was representative of every state and region of the country. The Negro sample included 18,891 recruits; the Caucasian sample included 93,955 recruits, and when a Combined Score was computed for each recruit, it was found that, roughly, 11% of the Negro recruits had obtained scores that equaled or exceeded the average score of the Caucasians. This is equivalent of saying that 11% of the Negro recruits obtained IQs that equalled or exceeded an IQ of 100. It must be understood that 50% of the Caucasians equalled or exceeded an IQ of 100, and this means that the Caucasian rate was almost five times greater than the Negro rate. Anyone interested in verifying these figures may do so in "Mental Testing in the United States Army," by Robert M. Yerkes, which can be found in *Memoirs of the National Academy of Science*, Volume XV, 1921.

No Improvement in Intelligence

A study published by this writer (see "Racial Differences—Twenty Years Later," in *Homo*, Volume 4, 1975)* contained a summary of all of the articles on Negro-Caucasian differences in intelligence that had been published in the 20-year period of 1951-1970. Out of the 1720 articles reviewed, only 79 contained data that could be analyzed. Sowell's alleged study was not among them. When the Negro overlap was computed for those of the 79 studies that had presented random samples of Negroes and Caucasians, it was found to be 11%. Included in this average overlap figure were the results of the work done by 41 authors on 19,793 Negro subjects and contained in 23 separate articles. Using the World War I data as a base (overlap in World War I was 11%) it is clear that the

Negro has shown no improvement in intelligence—when compared with Caucasian intelligence—between 1917 and 1970. Sowell's claim are completely refuted by such evidence.

The argument is often advanced that the Negro does poorly in psychological tests that deal with verbal material. Some psychological tests are made in two parts: one part is called verbal and deals with verbal symbols, and the other part is called performance (sometimes nonverbal, and sometimes objective) because this part deals with things the subject must do, such as arranging blocks into a design. If Negroes were penalized by verbal tests, overlap on performance tests would be greater than overlap on verbal tests: this means that Negroes would obtain higher IQs on performance tests than on verbal tests, and such a finding would fit well the idea denoted by the Culture Hypothesis.

Culture Hypothesis and the Facts

In this writer's study referred to above, 25 of the 79 articles presented both verbal and performance scores for the Negroes. These 25 studies were done by 42 authors on 3,679 subjects, and employed all of the major psychological tests, and a few other Negro overlap on the verbal questions was 19%; on the performance questions, overlap was 15%. Such was the actual performance of Negro subjects, and it clearly did not fit the Culture Hypothesis at all. Negro performance on psychological tests is enhanced by the use of verbal tests. Negroes are penalized by the use of performance tests. This is exactly the opposite of what the equalitarians say and write, and is a complete denial of the Culture Hypothesis.

One gets the feeling that we have gone far enough under the influence of the Culture Hypothesis. Articles such as Sowell's do nothing to improve the lot of the Negro, for the simple reason that a problem cannot be solved with false data. Problems cannot be solved by hoping they will go away, either. Sowell's comments, if they are based on data at all, are based on false data, and all of the other

environmental explanations of race differences are pretty much like Sowell's. Sowell may be sincere in thinking that the racial difference problem will dissolve with more intimate contact of the Negro with the prevailing Caucasian culture, but there is nothing scientific that supports this position.

On the other side of the issue, those of us who realize that the only way of curing an ailment is to start by recognizing the

real nature of the ailment are finding it harder and harder to be heard.

There seems to be a conspiracy on the part of all branches of news agencies to give exposure only to the Culture Hypothesis in spite of the prevailing evidence that it is not factual. It might now be time to deluge your local paper and television station with letters to the editor; it seems to be the only way of combatting this censorship.

The Book Shelf

The Star-of-David Chamber Blackwash

By OTHO McDONALD

NUREMBERG AND OTHER WAR CRIMES TRIALS, by Richard Harwood. 69 pp., magazine-style. Available from Noontide Press, P.O. Box 1248, Torrance, CA 90505. \$2.50 postpaid.

THE HIDDEN ASPECT of the World War II "war crimes" trials held in such places as Nuremberg, where Nazi leaders were accused of exterminating Jews, has at last been brought out in a new book by the British historian Richard Harwood. Revealed is the all-important factor of Jewish representation on the staff of the war crimes administrations.

The War Crimes Branch team at Dachau, who tortured their German prisoners into making phoney confessions, consisted of seven Jews (named by Harwood). Two of the judges, the British Prosecutor, the British Liaison Officer, four advisers to the American Chief Prosecutor, the ten men who collated the American documentary evidence, the head of the War Crimes Branch, the head of administration at the Dachau trials, the men in charge of translations and documentary films, one of the prison psychiatrists—all were Jewish. In addition, the men in charge of the pris-

oners before and after sentencing were Jewish. Even the executioner was a Jew, and the executions were carried out on a Jewish Feast Day.

While Jews represent only a tiny fraction of the population, it should not be too surprising that they were so heavily represented in the Nazi war crimes trials, considering that *the trials were a Jewish idea!* Harwood cites the statement of Mr. M. Perlzweig, who stated that it was the World Jewish Congress (of which he was a member) that "had secured the holding of the Nuremberg trials." (*Jewish Chronicle*, Dec. 16, 1949). Far from being a favorable development in justice, as they have been touted, the war crimes trials were an atrocity; a throw-back to the Star Chamber, a cynical, hypocritical demonstration of revenge against the only movement that had ever dared to challenge the power of International Jewry.

No Due Process

There was no due process of law in these kangaroo courts. The charges were picked out of thin air, invented on the spot. They might have been drawn up by some poet or philosopher—or maniac—but not by a competent jurist. No specific statute was alleged to have been broken.

*Available as a 58-page paperback from The Noontide Press, P.O. Box 1248, Torrance, CA 90505, \$2.50 postpaid.